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"UNITY" SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS,
Series XIII.


STUDIES OF JESUS,

—BY—

NEWTON M. MANN.

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Western Unitarian Sunday School Society,
40 Madison St., Chicago, Ill.
1883.





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"Unity" Sunday School Lessons—Series XIII.

STUDIES OF JESUS.

BY NEWTON M. MANN.

*(The younger children may pass over the parts marked *)*

LESSON I.

JESUS AS SUCCESSOR OF THE PROPHETS.

I. HOW MUCH DO WE KNOW ABOUT JESUS?

In this course of lessons we are going to see what we can learn of Jesus as a prophet, a successor of the great men of the earliest time, of whom we have already heard something. We are very familiar with the name of Jesus, but of the man himself we are not able to find out as much as we would like. We cannot tell how he looked, for he never sat for his picture. Of other notable persons of his time busts are preserved, so that we form quite definite notions of their appearance; careful biographies have been written, so that their careers can be seen plainly. But our "heads of Christ" are purely fanciful, and our best notions of the man are rather dim. There is a haze about him as well as a halo. We see some of the old prophets, who lived five hundred years before, much more clearly. We know Jeremiah, for instance, almost as though we had seen him and heard him. He stands out distinctly, and we are in no doubt about him. But after all that has been written and said about Jesus we have to admit that we don't know nearly as much about him as we wish we did.

*II. SOURCES OF INFORMATION.

How is it that we are able to make out Jeremiah so well, to see him and know him? Because the story of his life was written on the spot. Who wrote that story? Is there any book left that Jesus wrote? Did he write any book or any word that we know of? Have we any account of him that anybody took down on the spot? His disciples, long after he was dead, wrote about him such things as they could remember, and afterwards others added such things as they had heard, and others again added such things as they thought the Christ *ought* to have said and done.

and so in the course of a hundred years many had undertaken to tell the story of his life. (Luke I: 1-4.) Thus numerous "gospels" were produced, of which four remain. What are they called? We do not suppose that these were written by the persons whose names they bear. "The gospel according to Matthew" may have been drawn up according to traditions handed down from Matthew, and so of the others. Hence there are, as we should expect, agreements and disagreements.

III. OUR TASK.

From these sources we must get the best idea we can of our hero. We are going to try to read these stories so as to make them cast as much light as possible on him. Did you ever hear of a man who climbed a tree that he might look over the heads of the crowd and see Jesus? (Luke XIX: 2-4.) He was a little man, and the crowd was in the way. The crowd is still in the way of little folks who want to see Jesus, and eighteen hundred and fifty years haven't made the sycamore any easier to climb. The crowd is bigger, the distance is wider, and the tree is higher. Do you care to try it?

*IV. THE OFFICE OF PROPHET.

What is a prophet? Foreteller, we are apt to say, but that was not his main office in Israel. There the prophet was, first of all, a reformer, a strong protester against some great wrong. The prophets were to Israel what Garrison and Whittier and Lovejoy and Gerrit Smith have been to America,—men who stoutly rebuked their countrymen for their sins. For a long time no prophet of note had arisen in Israel. The last (author of *Daniel*, 165 B. C.) had not spoken in his own name, but in the name of another, dead and buried four hundred years. Why had the prophets failed to appear? Were there no more sins to be rebuked? Or was it because the priests had devised ways to save the people without much reference to their sins?

V. PROPHECY REVIVED.

The priests had taught the people to be very pious *on the outside*. They fasted, and said over their prayers, and kept holy-days, and were very precise about a thousand little formalities. In their anxiety to be religious they had forgotten to be good. There was need of some one to rise up and speak as the prophets of old had spoken, and put righteousness before all this everlasting rigmarole. Who is the first in gospel history to revive the prophetic speech? (Matt. III: 1-12.) Like which one of

the prophets did John get himself up? (Compare Matt. III: 4 with 2 Kings I: 8.) What was Jesus' opinion of John the Baptist? (Matt. XI: 11.) But if John was a rough-looking, rude-spoken man like Elijah, which of the prophets do you think Jesus was like? Can you find passages in Isaiah or Jeremiah which are like some things that Jesus said?

LESSON II.

THE CHILD JESUS.

(Read Chapters I., III. and IV. of "Bible for Learners," Vol. III.)

I have said we do not know as much of Jesus as we could wish. This is especially true of his childhood, where the record leaves us very much in the dark. We would like to know where and when he was born, what were his sports when a boy, what his playmates thought of him, whether he went to school, what his "standing" was, whether he learned a trade, and a hundred other things about him. But these were matters not thought of by his immediate followers. Their attention was directed to his active life as a teacher and to his death upon the cross. When in after years the desire came to know something of his birth and childhood, all those who could have given information on these points were dead. In the absence of facts, stories, which we call legends, came into currency, some of them very sweet and pretty, and these we have now to consider.

*I. THE FAMILY RECORD.

It isn't much matter whose son Jesus was. He was so great a man that nothing could be added to his reputation by saying that So-and-So was his father or mother. He himself cared little about high birth or low birth. Descent from David was not one of *his* pretensions. (Matt. XII: 46-50; Mark XII: 35-37.) It has made Mary's fame to be his mother; but he gains nothing, we should say, by being reckoned of royal blood. But Jews did not think so. The tradition was strong with them that the Messiah was to be a descendant of David, and so the family record of Jesus must be made to show this. Two attempts to construct a pedigree are preserved. (Matt. I; Luke III: 23.—) Do these agree? How many names in the first register are found in the second? How many more generations between David and Jesus in the second register than in the first?

II. THE BIRTHPLACE.

It was a common notion in those days that everything in the life of Jesus corresponded with what some prophet had foretold. So wherever facts were wanting to make out the story, they could be supplied by just

turning back to the Old Testament to see what the predictions were. This way of making history was very bad indeed; but it was rendered much worse by a strangely stupid application of the prophecies. From a passage in Micah (V: 2) the writer of the first gospel inferred that the Christ was to be born in Bethlehem, though the passage really has no such meaning. Out of this grew the lovely legend of the birth in Bethlehem, while in fact Jesus was probably born at his parents' home in Nazareth. This legend is much more ingenious than the pedigree. What reason is assigned for Joseph and Mary being in Bethlehem? How happened the inn to be full? What disposition did the landlord make of his guests from Nazareth? Where was the baby lain to take his first nap?

Several other legends sprung up in connection with this.

III. THE MAGI.

When, after he had passed away, Jesus came to be thought of as more than man, it was felt that so important a matter as his birth ought to have been marked by signs and wonders, and to have made a stir even in distant lands. To answer this feeling, the story of the "wise men of the East" and their moving star came to be told. It is more of a fairy story than the other. How does it run? I will not ask you who the "wise men" were, where they came from, where they went to, or what good ever came of their visit; but you may ask yourselves these questions.

IV. THE ANGELS AND THE SHEPHERDS.

This is another legend to be accounted for in the same way. It seemed as though the coming of Jesus into the world ought to have made a stir, not only on earth, but in heaven. What is the story? When angels take part in the proceedings do you consider the proceedings real or fanciful? The story of the singing angels is a beautiful fiction: it is good poetry, but is it fact?

V. THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT.

The one unpleasant and useless fiction associated with the birth of Jesus is the account of the flight into Egypt and the slaughter of the innocents by Herod. (Matt. II: 13-18.) We have good reason to think that no such horrid thing took place. The story was told because a text of the Old Testament (Hosea XI: 1) says something about God calling his son out of Egypt; and there seemed no way of calling Jesus out of Egypt without first getting him down there. Hence the dreams, and the angels, and the killing of 2,000 babies.

VI. THE BOY IN THE TEMPLE.

One incident of the childhood of Jesus is related which has more signs of truth. His parents were good Jews, and every year they went up to Jerusalem to the great feast of the passover. How far is it? How did they travel? The little children staid at home; but Jesus was twelve years old now, and could journey with them. When they had done with the celebration and were well on their way back with their neighbors and friends, what happened? Did they return to Jerusalem? Where did they find their boy? Does it not seem that he must have been a very bright lad to hold conversation with these learned men?

LESSON III.

THE YOUTH OF JESUS.

I. HOW SHALL WE FIND THE LAD?

The story to which we have just referred has it that Joseph and Mary were three days finding their boy the time he was left behind in Jerusalem. It is likely to take us much longer to find him, and, as the boy has been lost such a very great while, we shall not be able to identify him so positively as they did. But, if we do get sight of him, let us not upbraid him for getting lost, for no doubt he has been "about his Father's business." In setting out on this search we have two things to guide us. First, we know what sort of a *man* Jesus was. Can we not from the man judge something of the boy? Not always in every particular, to be sure. Dull boys have made bright men; bad boys have made good men; but when this has happened it has usually been after many years. How old was Jesus when he died? A young man, you see. In the *young* man we can hardly be mistaken as to what the boy was. Do you not suppose that the preacher who was so wise at thirty must have been doing some good thinking at twelve? Do you think it likely that he spent his time stoning birds, breaking up their nests, robbing the neighbors' orchards, plaguing his little sisters, or loitering with loafers around the street-corners? Judging simply from what we know of the man, what kind of a boy must we imagine him to have been? We can hardly avoid supposing that he was an open-minded youth, of kindly disposition and good conscience.

*II. HIS SURROUNDINGS.

An earnest, sympathetic, thoughtful boy was Jesus; that is our first guide. The other is the sort of world in which he was brought up. For that kind of boy is always influenced by the spirit of the age,—that is to say, by the living thought of the time, the hopes and purposes of the best people. He is affected by public events of which he is the witness, and by the aspect of nature about him.

*III. THE SCENERY OF GALILEE.

We note, first, the least decisive of these influences. Do you think the face of a country has to do with the character of the people? that grand

scenery produces grand men? that we are to look to the Adirondacks and the slopes of the Rocky Mountains for our future leaders? We may not say as much as that, and still see that some persons are very much affected by the glorious aspects which Nature here and there puts on. What spots do you recall as the most impressive that you have ever seen? Why do people who can afford it go every summer to the mountains, or the lakes, or the sea-shore? There are various reasons, but some go for the mental effect of the scenery, to be up-lifted and inspired by it. Receptive souls are always subject to influences that do not touch other people, and we may be sure the beauty of the lakes and mountains of Galilee had something to do in shaping the mind and heart of Jesus. It is still a charming region, as travelers say, and, in the old time, when every tillable acre was cultivated, must have been much more beautiful.

IV. SOCIETY AND RELIGION IN GALILEE.

Turn to a map of the Palestine of the Christian era, and mark the situation of Galilee. See how it is separated from Judea by the region of Samaria. Observe that Jerusalem is in Judea, with its temple and priests and rigorous Jewish customs. Samaria lying between made Galilee practically a long way from Jerusalem. Why? (John IV: 9) Over beyond Samaria the Galileans were in good degree delivered from priestly rule. They neglected many of the ceremonies, and were not considered orthodox by their brethren in the south. (John I: 46.) In the estimation of a strict Jew of those days about the worst thing one of their race could do was to mingle with people of other races. And this was the fault of the Galileans. In their country a great many foreigners had settled, attracted by its beauty and its wealth. Caravans were constantly passing through it, carrying the richest trade of the world. People of every nation and of every religion were seen there,—wide-awake, enterprising people, with ideas in their heads as well as money in their pockets. In the course of time the Jewish inhabitants had come to be strongly influenced by these surroundings. Their very language had been modified, and the Galilean was known by a foreign accent. (Matt. XXVI: 73.) It was a region in which Jew and Gentile were rubbed together with the effect of taking the corners off of both. Broad, liberal views were current, and it was the place of all places for the prophet to rise who should be able to speak to every nation and tribe and tongue and people.

LESSON IV.

THE YOUTH OF JESUS, (CONTINUED.)

I. THE THRIFT OF GALILEE.

Let it be observed that this rich and beautiful country was the home of a numerous people in those days. It was of less than twice the size of Cook county (Ill.,) and yet is said to have contained two hundred and forty towns and cities. The hills and valleys literally swarmed with people. Though under the Roman dominion, the inhabitants were brave and warlike enough to command the respect of their masters. They were industrious and intelligent too, knew what was going on in the world. Even the poorer classes were mostly comfortable; their wants were few and easily met. Were the parents of Jesus rich or poor? What was his father's trade? Jesus, when he was old enough to help, no doubt put his hand to the same labor. Tradition has it that they had a shop where they made ploughs and ox-bows.

*II. WORKING AND THINKING.

With strength to labor came strength for reflection. Carpenters and shoemakers have done a great deal of thinking. The work that Jesus had to do was simple and left his mind free to range on fields in which ploughs and ox-bows play no part. He must have been troubled to reconcile the claims of the strict Jews that they alone were God's people with facts of which he had been the witness. From his babyhood he had been playing daily with the children of foreigners, and had found them very like Jewish children. He knew many excellent people who were not Jews. He knew many Jews who seemed none the worse for holding lightly to the ritual of their church. These things led him to wonder if there might not be found a broader Church that would include all good people and take in everybody's children. Why should a good man turn his back upon other good men for not being born of the same race with him? Perhaps the denomination was not of so very much matter after all.

*III. THE MISSION OF THE JEW.

But if the Jew had a better religion than other men, the thing for him to do was to give it to them. This is what the wisest and best Jews had long been thinking, and Jesus was so circumstanced that the idea must have come home to him. But how could the Jew commend his religion to the rest of mankind? Manifestly by making it, first of all, the practice of goodness. If the Jewish religion could be simplified and made pure, the world would embrace it. This was the needed work, and the boy, as he drove his plane or plied his adz, thought of a higher task that he would like to accomplish.

IV. HOW TO REVIVE THE CHURCH.

Others had thought to do this thing, but it was a tradition in Israel that the church could be revived only by rebuilding the kingdom. The nation must first be made independent, then its faith could be reformed. Consequently the standard of the prophet was the standard of revolt. The man of God must first be a leader of armies and cast out the foreigner. The people looked for a prince to come, a veritable son of David, mighty with the sword, to restore the ancient glories of the kingdom.

V. A GALILEAN REVOLT.

Jesus in his boyhood was witness of one of these efforts to redeem Israel with the sword. Judas the Galilean gathered a little army and proclaimed a "holy war" against Rome. Tribute to Cæsar, he declared, was treason to Jehovah. Some thought they saw in this the dawn of better days, the return of the scepter to Israel. High hopes went throbbing through many hearts that the hour of deliverance was at hand. Jesus felt them with the rest, for he, too, was a patriot, only too young to join the band of warriors. He could but watch their doings, and hope and pray for their success. But in the first onset of the foe Judas was crushed, and for another generation the vision of the kingdom was put off.

VI. ANOTHER "KINGDOM."

What must have been the thoughts of Jesus as he saw the victorious legions marching into his native village, Judas and his followers killed or scattered in the mountains? And what must he have thought when he learned that rebellion had been tried a hundred times and always came to the same end? He was led to ask himself whether, after all,

the sword was the thing with which to redeem Israel. Was not the " Kingdom of God " something to be had without the Jewish kingdom ? Might not the Messiah be a preacher of righteousness, with no blood on his hands, no claims of royalty, no thought of national independence ? Could not the foundation be laid of a kingdom of righteousness inside of men and not outside, in which God indeed should be king ; a Church distinct from the State, into which all good souls of all nations could be brought ? Was not this the true kingdom to be prayed for, this the redemption the Jew might bring, not to Israel alone, but to mankind ? If so, it was time to lay aside, and forever, all measures of violence.

LESSON V.

SETTING OUT TO PREACH.

I. NOT WELL UNDERSTOOD AT HOME.

All this time, while great thoughts were passing in the mind of Jesus, his father and mother did not much understand him. He was probably not a very good carpenter, his mind was so much on other subjects. Joseph was disappointed in the turn the youth had taken, his lack of interest in the shop and his visionary notions of a heavenly kingdom to be established on earth. What a sad failure the young man was going to be, with no taste for carpentering, and his head full of such a strange fancy!

*II. BOOKS AND SOLITUDE.

Finding so little sympathy among his kinsfolk, Jesus was led the more to read the books of his people, from which he had first caught the spirit of prophecy. He went on, too, and read other books, not canonical, especially one by another Jesus, who had lived about 200 years before. You will find this in the Apocrypha following the Old Testament in some bibles. See how many sayings in it are substantially repeated in the gospels. (Compare Matt. V : 3 with Eccl'us III. 19, 20; Matt. V : 8 with Eccl'us XIV : 2; Matt. V : 11 with Eccl'us IV : 28; Matt. V : 23 with Eccl'us XXXV : 1-3; Matt. V : 25 with Eccl'us VIII : 1 ff; Matt. V : 34 with Eccl'us XXVII : 14; Matt. VI : 3 with Eccl'us XXXII : 23; Matt. VI : 12 with Eccl'us XXVIII : 2; Matt. VI : 14 with Eccl'us XVIII : 13; Matt. VI : 15 with Eccl'us XXVIII : 4, 5; Matt. VI : 19, 20 with Eccl'us XXIX : 11, 12; Matt. VI : 22 with Eccl'us III : 25; Matt. VII : 7, 8 with Eccl'us II : 10, 11, VI : 27; Matt. VII : 11 with Eccl'us XVII : 29. These are some of the strikingly parallel passages in three chapters of Matthew. Read "The Wisdom of Jesus Sirach," and see how many more indications you can find that Jesus of Nazareth used to read the same book.)

III. STROLLS IN THE COUNTRY.

When he found that he could not talk with his father or mother of his project, Jesus often took to the country about Nazareth, spending many hours in solitary walks thinking of what he would do. It seemed to him that he *must* go and speak to the people, in the synagogues and in

the streets, the high thoughts that were ever uppermost in his mind; that he *must* take up the work of a prophet in Israel. Then the thought would come, Who was he that he should do this thing? Was not the land full of men better qualified by birth and training for the task? What could a carpenter's son, who had only read his Bible and a few little books beside, do towards reforming the world?

IV. THE BAPTISM.

Sometimes he would pursue his walks many miles, and stay from home for days together, going to the valley of the Jordan and on to the wilderness of Judea. There he saw John in the full tide of a vigorous career, preaching repentance and administering his rite of baptism to thousands. Jesus was so much drawn to the preacher that he joined the company of his followers and was baptized with the rest in the Jordan. (Matt. III: 13.) Here was proof that a man of humble birth and little education, if he had a burning word to utter, could successfully take up the vocation of a prophet. The sight of this rude man, doing something like what he himself had so long thought of doing, brought the crisis in the mind of Jesus. Should he now break over the barriers and enter upon the work of a prophet? The time had come to decide this question. Where did he go to decide it? (Matt. IV: 1.)

*V. THE TEMPTATION.

The story is legendary, but this is the main point of it. Jesus was having the struggle out with himself as to his own career. Should he go back to carpentry, keep on making plows and ox-bows, or whatever the business was, or should he disappoint his friends, and in the face of all obstacles and apprehensions become a preacher? Was his idea of the kingdom sound and safe to venture upon? or was it a hallucination of his own brain, the preaching of which at most would only make another sect of fanatics? The story represents these fears and suspicions as an evil spirit, luring him to desist from his undertaking. (Matt. IV: 1-11.) Finally the combat with doubt and fear is over, and he is happy. How is this happiness represented? (11) What was his decision?

VI. LEAVING NAZARETH.

It was of no use for him to commence preaching in Nazareth. If he tried it, he soon found that nobody cared to hear the carpenter's son. People tossed their heads and said he was getting above his business. Where did he go to live? (Matt. IV: 13.) Point out the place on the map. On what sea is it situated? What abstract is left of his first sermon there? (17)

LESSON VI.

THE SERMONS.

We have seen that Jesus became a teacher of religion only after much conflict of feeling. He had no ambition to make a display of his powers, or cut a distinguished figure. He spoke because he had something to say.

I. THE MANNER OF HIS PREACHING.

He went to Capernaum, but not because the parish there invited him to its pulpit at a good round salary. There was no pulpit, no parish and no salary. He spoke in the synagogues, on the common, by the lake, wherever and whenever opportunity offered. His sermons were not written. Men who start great movements among the common people do not read to them. They speak as man to man. Nowadays the stenographer takes down the orator's words as fast as he utters them. But Jesus had no stenographer, and only *points* in his discourses were preserved, and such *sayings* as by repetition or emphasis were impressed upon the memory of his listeners. It was not his custom to take a text, as our preachers commonly do, from the bible; any little incident served to suggest the topic of discourse, which always tended to the central thought of the kingdom of heaven. He felt no necessity, as our preachers do, of talking a certain length of time, but was always free to stop when he got through, which was generally pretty soon, so that even the children did not get tired. As his preaching was mostly in the open air, there was no organ, no choir, no liturgy. Not even a prayer was said, but he at once opened his mouth and taught them.

II. THE EFFECT OF HIS PREACHING.

It was not long before he had audiences. Whatever his neighbors in Nazareth may have thought of the carpenter becoming a prophet, in other parts of Galilee throngs gathered about him wherever he went. Some came from the fancy, common in those days, that the man of God must have power to heal the sick—a motive much magnified, no doubt, by the gospel writers, whose aim was greatly to exalt Jesus—but many more came because they loved his earnest, pointed, convincing talk.

Sometimes the multitude reclined upon the grassy slope of a mountain, while he, sitting upon a little eminence, spoke to them of his kingdom and of the duties of those who would enter in. (Matt. V: 1.) Sometimes they lined the sea-shore, he addressing them from a boat upon the quiet water. (Matt. XIII: 2.) Sometimes, in their eagerness to hear him, they forgot their dinners (Matt. XV: 32), which is probably more than can be said of any preacher in these days.

*III, THE SAYINGS.

It does not always follow that the sermon is good because it draws a crowd. But that is a great preacher who can draw a crowd with a good sermon. From the few remembered passages which the gospels preserve of the discourses of Jesus, we see that they were of the highest order; and putting this with the fact that they were listened to by multitudes, how incalculable seems the loss that they were not fully reported. More than a hundred years afterward, some one, sensible of this, undertook to reproduce them out of his own head (John's Gospel), but, of course, with unsatisfactory result. Scattered through the other Gospels we find about all there is of Jesus' words that can be considered genuine.

*IV. THE "SERMON ON THE MOUNT."

One collection of these we may briefly consider. Where do we find what is called "The Sermon on the Mount?" As you read it, does it seem to you like a connected discourse? Might it not be better called "Fragments from a score of sermons on the Mount?" These are the remembered passages from all the early part of Jesus' teaching. We may be sure he didn't mix up a hundred topics in one discourse. Little minds ramble round; the great mind deals with only one thing at a time. Looking into these fragments (Matt. V., VI., VII.,) let us see what the character of the teaching is. Is the tone cheerful, or gloomy? Do the verses read as though the speaker thought mankind by nature corrupt and hopelessly lost? Does he say anything about atonement or salvation by the shedding of his blood? Are his words threatening or consoling? Does he pronounce curses or blessings? Does he say anything of the importance of ceremonies, the need of observing holy days, keeping Lent or counting beads? What is it, then, he would have people do? (V: 42, 44; VI: 3, 6; VII: 5, 7, 12.) We see that these are words greater than John's. John had preached repentance and remission of sins that are past; Jesus added to this provisions for avoiding sins in the future. In the kingdom of heaven which he sought to establish on earth the citizens were to be perfect, as their Father in heaven is perfect.

LESSON VII.

PARABLES OF THE KINGDOM.

What is a parable? How does it differ from a fable? How does it differ from a popular tale or myth, such as Cinderella, Red Riding Hood, The Dog and the Sparrow? How does it differ from an allegory? How does it differ from a proverb? (Observe that in the fable beasts are made to talk and do other things beyond their capacity; that the fable often only points a jest; that the popular tale is not originally told for a moral purpose, cannot be traced to any author; that the allegory is not told for the sake of making a comparison.) The parable may be long or very short. For example of the briefest see Luke IV: 23. Jesus' first preaching was on the heavenly kingdom he wanted to establish among men. Naturally the first parables dealt with the same subject. Of these doubtless many are lost, and of those that remain some are very imperfectly preserved. We make out ten, counting some that may not be genuine. These seem to have been spoken in the country, and the likenesses are from what he said there. Were the disciples surprised to see him taking up this method of teaching? (Matt. XIII: 10.) Why did he do it? (Matt. XIII: 13.) He seems to have found that the people would not long be interested in his talk unless he told a good many stories. The parables of the kingdom are these, to be found beginning with the verse indicated:

1. THE SOWER (Matt. XIII: 3).—Give the substance of the parable? Who is meant by the sower? What is meant by the seed? What classes of persons are indicated as receiving the seed by the wayside? In rocky places? Among thorns? In good ground? This similitude of preaching to sowing seed is very simple to us, from having heard it so much, but was the meaning clear to the disciples, or did they require an explanation? (Matt. XIII: 18-23.)

*2. THE WHEAT AND THE TARES (Matt. XIII: 24).—There is some question about this being an utterance of Jesus. It seems to assume a condition of things which could scarcely have existed in his lifetime. The occasion to weed out tares arose only after the church was well established. Still it may truly show the disposition of Jesus not to

make an uproar and endanger the church for the sake of getting out of it some people who, in our judgment, do not belong in it.

3. THE MUSTARD SEED (Matt. XIII: 31).—Repeat this beautiful similitude. What does the growth of mustard from a little seed to a stately plant symbolize?

4. THE SEED CAST INTO THE GROUND (Mark IV: 26).—What idea is conveyed by this parable? When once a movement is well started does it not seem to go itself? The movers then can watch the growth, which goes on like that of the farmer's crop, even while they sleep.

5. THE LEAVEN (Matt. XIII: 33).—Repeat this short parable. What is the meaning? Why should he say *three* measures of meal? He wanted to indicate a considerable heap, and three measures made about a bushel.

*6. THE HID TREASURE (Matt. XIII: 44).—Do you think this as happily conceived as the preceding? Is it quite the thing to take advantage of the owner's ignorance to buy a field for less than the value contained in it? Some men will do such things, but we do not like to see religious zeal illustrated by such a transaction,

7. THE PEARL OF GREAT PRICE (Matt. XIII: 45).—Repeat this much more pleasing parable. The kingdom of God is indeed a goodly pearl, to secure which one may well give all he has.

*8. THE NET CAST INTO THE SEA (Matt. XIII: 47).—This you notice is not unlike the parable of the Wheat and the Tares, though having this in its favor, that the "evil one" (meaning some heretic) is not brought in. That there should have been at that early time any reason to consider ways of getting rid of bad people, who had chanced to get into the company of the disciples, seems unlikely. Besides, burning these people in a furnace is very unpleasant to think of.

9. THE LABORERS IN THE VINEYARD (Matt. XX: 1).—Here the owner of the vineyard pays the laborers who have toiled all day just what he agreed to pay them. Those who came late, and even those who worked only one hour, he generously gives the same amount. So in the church of Christ it is not length of service, but earnestness and devotedness that counts.

10. THE TREASURES OF THE HOUSEHOLDER (Matt. XIII: 52).—Some notable discourse fitly closed with the similitude of the well-taught disciple to a householder who has many good things to set before his guests. Rich clothing and other valuables were stored in the houses of the well-to-do for this purpose in Bible times.

LESSON VIII. CITY PARABLES.

Ten more parables are to be here considered. They were uttered a little later, have less of nature and of the kingdom and more of the life of men in them. Jesus found that the world was not nearly so ready to be turned into a kingdom of heaven as he had supposed, and, as time wore on, his enthusiasm on that subject subsided somewhat. He had visited the towns and seen the wickedness of which they were full. He had seen, also, a higher order of men. These observations of mankind were the groundwork of the parables of this lesson. A further set of ten will be taken up later.

11. THE TWO DEBTORS (Luke VII: 41).—Where was Jesus when he spoke this parable? Who came into the house while they were eating? What did she do? How did the host like this? What was he saying to himself? When people are saying something to themselves you can often tell what it is by their looks. Jesus easily saw what his host, the Pharisee, was thinking, and pleasantly told the story of the Two Debtors. Mark the urbanity of the teacher. Give the parable. How did it apply to the persons present?

12. THE MERCILESS SERVANT (Matt. XVIII: 23).—What arrangement does the king make with the servant who owes him a great sum of money? When this servant is thus set free from a debt he never could pay, what does he do to one of his fellow-servants who owes him the paltry sum of \$17.50? Is that a nice thing for a man to do who has just been released from a great debt? Can any of us afford to be very severe on others, considering how much we need to be forgiven ourselves?

13. THE GOOD SAMARITAN (Luke X: 30).—Everybody knows this story, and surely nothing finer in this line is anywhere to be found. What is it designed to teach? Why is a Samaritan chosen to personate kindness? How much money was "two pence?" (About 35 cents, equal then in purchasing power to several times that amount now.) There were no charges for ordinary entertainment at inns in those days.

14. **THE FRIEND COME AT MIDNIGHT** (Luke XI: 5).—What does the friend come for? What answer does he get? How does he finally secure his loaves? What does this teach? Never to give over seeking a good thing while there remains a possibility of getting it. Where else do you find the passage that follows?

15. **THE RICH FOOL** (Luke XII: 16).—The lesson of this parable is in the preceding verse (Luke XII: 15), which let every one learn by heart.

16. **THE FIG TREE** (Luke XIII: 6).—Possibly some children have been tenderly cared for through many years without giving any return. Might not the parents become discouraged and almost think such little folks were not worth raising? The parable says, Keep on tending them another year, and perhaps they will come to something yet.

17. **THE GREAT SUPPER** (Luke XIV: 16).—A parable of the kingdom, but of a different order from the others. It marks a time when people were turning away from the Teacher.

18. **THE LOST SHEEP** (Luke XV: 3).—Where else do you find this parable? What was the occasion of it? (Luke XV: 2.) Wherein is a bad person like a sheep or other valuable that is lost? Another form is the Lost Piece of Money, which follows. (Luke XV: 8-10.)

19. **THE PRODIGAL SON** (Luke XV: 11).—The greatest of all the parables, clearly teaching the doctrine of Jesus concerning the relation between God and man. Observe the harmony between The Laborers in the Vineyard, The Lost Sheep, and this. Heaven overflows with bounty, and seeks undeserving objects on which to pour its generosity. The Father's heart is full of tenderness for his child, and solicitude for the straying seems almost to cast the rewards of fidelity in the shade. Study this parable long and well.

20. **THE PHARISEE AND THE PUBLICAN** (Luke XVIII: 9).—What class of people does the Pharisee stand for? How did Jesus esteem long prayers and careful observance of fasts and other forms? Who were 'Publicans?' What is the effect of bringing in one of this despised class to contrast with the pious and proud Pharisee?

LESSON IX.

WHAT THE PEOPLE THOUGHT OF HIM.

I. SUCCESS IN CAPERNAUM.

We have already seen that Jesus avoided commencing his work in Nazareth. He went to Capernaum, contrived to build or buy him a house there, and in that house (Mark II: 2) and in the synagogues and other places he preached to the people. Did many come to hear him? (Matt. IV: 25; VIII: 1, 18; Luke XII: 1.) What did they seem to think of him? Did report of him get abroad? (Matt. IX: 31.) From his home in Capernaum he went out on repeated excursions through the cities and villages of Galilee, preaching his gospel of the kingdom. (Matt. IX: 35.)

II. HEALING THE SICK.

In those days the notion prevailed that a prophet could cure the sick, raise the dead, or do anything else he pleased. So as people began to consider Jesus a prophet, they took it for granted that he could do many wonderful things. It is a curious fact that what everybody expects to happen is pretty sure to come about, at least to all appearances. No doubt many sick persons were relieved by his laying his hands upon them, from the effect of confident expectation that such would be the result. Such cures have never been uncommon; they occur every day. Even in this age they are apt to be attributed to some miraculous, or at least superhuman, agency; much more must they have been reckoned miraculous in the days of Jesus. He may very likely have so regarded them himself. Evidently his reputation soon came to stand more on his healing than on his preaching power. The first three gospels report more cures than sermons or parables. Some of these stories, such as the removing of blindness or deafness, appear to have had at first a spiritual meaning. People were mentally blind—couldn't see the point of a sermon or a parable; mentally deaf—couldn't hear high thoughts; and these were cured by the instructions of the Teacher. But not all the stories are to be explained in this way, and no doubt physical disorders were among the evils he undertook to remedy. The prophet of the kingdom of heaven was in great peril of being lost in the thaumaturgist.

There are men now traveling over this country expelling disease by a touch. We do not count their success any evidence that they are prophets, any evidence that they are even respectable persons. So completely have the conditions changed since the Christian era.

III. AT NAZARETH.

After preaching a little while in other parts of the country, and after the fame of his doings had gone through all Galilee, Jesus came to his old home in Nazareth (Luke IV: 16.) But the people there had not forgotten that he was a poor carpenter, and were by no means ready to do him any particular homage. He spoke in the synagogue (every Jew was at liberty to do that), but the audience was less appreciative than he had had elsewhere. As to his miraculous gifts of healing, his old neighbors and kinsmen were skeptical. "Do for us some of these mighty works we have heard about," they said. Could he satisfy them? (Mark VI: 5.) He could not heal the people of their diseases *unless the people believed he could heal them*, and at Nazareth they just laughed at such a pretension. What proverb did Jesus apply to the case? (Mark VI: 4.) According to Luke's account (which is to be taken with a grain of salt) he excused his inability by referring to Elijah and Elisha, who did not do wonders every day, but only on rare occasions, and for those to whom they were sent. (Luke IV: 25, 26.) What is said to have been the effect of this utterance? (28, 29.)

IV. IN OTHER CITIES.

In other parts of Galilee he was welcomed, and, notwithstanding his rebuff in Nazareth, went on increasing his reputation as a teacher. What class of people greeted him most cordially? (Mark XII: 37.) What did they consider him to be? (Mark VI: 5.) From the tone of the gospels, what impression do you get of the attitude of the Pharisees toward him? It is probable that the writers give us a false impression, and that the Pharisees took an interest in his work, and in the first part of his career treated him with marked respect. He was invited to their houses, they listened to his discourses, and had questions to ask him which he was pleased to answer. It seems that the Pharisees at first had strong hopes that he would do a needed work for Israel in which they could take part. But his preaching became too searching for them and they grew cold.

LESSON X.

WHAT HE THOUGHT OF THE PEOPLE.

I. FIRST IMPRESSIONS.

In the early part of his ministry Jesus was full of hope and gladness, and really thought the kingdom of heaven was at hand. His people, he believed, were prepared for a religious advance, and needed but the instructions of a faithful leader to set them in the path of righteousness. The crowds that gathered to hear him gave him great encouragement. The seed had been sown, the crop was already ripening, and it only needed reapers to harvest the grain. (Matt. IX: 37.)

II. HIS OPINION OF THE PHARISEES.

At this time he thought well of the Pharisees, who were doubtless the best people among his countrymen. We find him eating at their tables (Luke VII: 36; XI: 37; XIV: 1) and courteously welcoming them in turn. He refers to them as the healthy and sound who do not need a physician (Matt. IX: 12), and explains any lack of attention to them by saying that he did not come "to call the righteous to repentance." He never altogether liked them, they were so formal and precise in their piety, and his dislike of this feature became so pronounced that after a while he came to an open rupture with them. What hard things does he say of them toward the close? (Matt. XXIII: 13, 29; Luke XI: 39, 44.)

III. OF SINNERS.

Sinners among the Jews were those who were under censure for neglect of the observances prescribed in the Levitical Law. In Galilee half the people were sinners. (Observe the peculiar use of the word, so different from the use now made of it.) It appeared to Jesus that these people were not so bad as they were represented, and that they were especially the ones he ought to help. If they had erred, the thing to do was to bring them back to fidelity. Contempt and threats and curses were what they generally received; what course did Jesus take? Did he seek their company? Did he eat with them? What did the strict Jew think of it? (Matt. IX: 11.) What title did he get for this, by which he is still known? (Matt. XI: 19.) Tell the touching story of the sinner who came to him while he was dining with a Pharisee. (Luke VII: 36-50.)

IV. OF PUBLICANS.

Publicans were a class of Jews who accepted office of *tax-collectors*. They did the hated service of collecting the imperial taxes. They were naturally considered the enemies of their country and of Jehovah, for the taxes were exorbitant and the manner of extorting them a scandal even in distant Rome. These tax-collectors were "sinners," doubly so. Did Jesus turn his back upon them? (Matt. IX: 10; Mark II: 16; Luke VII: 34.) These despised persons appreciated the interest that Jesus took in them, and while they appealed to his sympathy—for they were between two fires, the government and the people—they encouraged his hope. He found them more ready to receive his gospel than some who could show a better record. (Matt. XXI: 31.) What was the story he told of a Pharisee and a publican in the temple? (Luke XVIII: 10-14.)

V. A SENSATION NOT A REFORM.

Jesus soon saw that the following of a great crowd meant less than it seemed. It was one thing to stir a popular excitement, and another to set on foot a radical reform. The multitude poured out to hear him, and went back to their old ways again. The sower had assiduously sown his seed, but somehow most of it had fallen upon thin soil, where it had sprung up quickly and come to nothing, so that the harvest was far from plentiful after all. The cheerful tone of the Master somewhat disappeared, and he began to utter reproaches. (Matt. XI: 21; Luke VI: 24ff.) Few were found ready to give up all for the kingdom of heaven. Out of all the multitude that followed him at the outset, how many became permanently attached to him and remained his constant companions? Jesus was not the first or the last preacher to begin his career with expectations of speedily making the world over anew, to find through many bitter disappointments that the world will not be made over in a hurry, and that the most faithful labor of a prophet will yield but slight visible returns.

VI. HOPE DEFERRED BUT STILL UNSHAKEN.

But Jesus is never completely discouraged. He always holds out the hope and promise of better days. The kingdom of heaven will surely come. Men will learn at last to live together under the Golden Rule. They will come not only to talk but to act as though they all were brothers. Repeat his apostrophe to Jerusalem. (Matt. XXIII: 37-39.) But even Jerusalem should come in time to welcome his word and call him blessed.

LESSON XI.

THE GREAT DENUNCIATION.

I. EBB OF THE POPULAR TIDE.

The interest at first shown in Jesus did not keep up among the Galileans. He had criticised the Pharisees, and they grew cold and even hostile. Their influence with the people made itself felt against him. What had happened to John? (Matt. XIV: 3-12.) What did Jesus do when he heard of that? (Matt. XIV: 13.) What do we hear about a deputation of Pharisees and scribes coming from Jerusalem to see if he was teaching in accordance with the law and the traditions? (Mark VII.) Did he try to come to an understanding with them, or did he make it plain that he was not teaching their doctrines? It was the critical point in his career. Thenceforth he must expect to find the whole orthodox power implacably arrayed against him. Where did he go immediately after this interview? (Mark VII: 24.) Was it to escape from any plot of the incensed Pharisees? Perhaps so. It is said he sought retirement, and wished no one to know where he was. Only the twelve went with him, and he did not go to preach. Indeed, it does not appear that he ever spoke any more in the synagogues. Orthodoxy had shut the doors upon him. In the Jewish church he was a heretic, and a great part of his power with the people was gone. From this time on his talk was chiefly with his disciples. The prejudices and blindness of the people well-nigh exhausted his patience. What does he say of his own city, where, a few months before, he was so warmly greeted? (Matt XI: 23, 24.) From this time on we catch now and then a word which shows his apprehension that his cause was lost. (Luke IX: 41; XI: 29-32; XVIII: 8.)

II. THE CONFLICT.

He had declared war upon the Pharisees, and either they or he must be destroyed. Where should he go to have the struggle out? Where, but to Jerusalem, the seat and center of the orthodox faith? It might cost him his life; but if he did not go his gospel must come to naught. Already many who had been friendly to the movement pronounced it a failure. He might elude his enemies and fly to Tyre, or over the sea, to save his life, when no principle was sacrificed; but now, when the gospel

itself was at stake, he must not count his life dear. He must go forward and beard the lion in his very den. It was a velvet paw that was extended to him as he entered the city. Who met and questioned him there? (Matt. XXII: 15, 23, 34.)

III. PLAIN WORDS.

His coming and his conversation had excited an interest, and it is said all the city was stirred. (Matt. XXI: 10, 11.) The time to speak his boldest had come, not because he loved strife, but because he loved truth and right. Openly he raised his voice against the Pharisees in the city where they were most at home, arraigning them for their formalism, their insincerity, their disregard of their fellowmen,—told them they were obstructions to progress,—would not go forward themselves, nor let others, and heaped upon them such a torrent of invective as never issued from his mouth before. (Matt. XXIII.)

IV. THE EFFECT.

There could have been but one result. The people, much as they may have felt the justice of his words, were not prepared to join in denouncing their spiritual guides and their most influential and pious citizens. They listened to the young prophet from Galilee, but could promise him no support.

V. AN APOCALYPSE.

The prospect for Jesus was never more gloomy. Evidently the kingdom of heaven was not at hand. Quite the reverse. Desolation and destruction instead. From the mood which was then forced upon him came a weird prophecy of disaster to the holy city, interfused with visions of what he called "the end of the age." (Matt. XXIV. Compare Dan. XII; 2 Esdras XV, XVI.)

LESSON XII.

MORE PARABLES.

We now resume the enumeration of the parables from Lesson VIII. Most of the following were spoken in Jerusalem, and they all appear to belong to the latter part of the ministry of Jesus. From what we have already learned, we are prepared to mark the altered tone.

*21. THE WEDDING FEAST (Luke XII: 35.)—Your expectations from this title are hardly met in the text, which is somewhat confused. The parable teaches watchfulness and fidelity, and runs on through various forms to verse 49. It lacks unity, and has evidently suffered in editing.

*22. THE UNJUST STEWARD (Luke XVI: 1.)—One of the most obscure and unsatisfactory of the parables. One cannot but think that it must have provoked among those who heard it a great many disagreeable questions. At any rate they can hardly fail to occur to the reader now if he has his eyes half open.

*23. THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS (Luke XVI: 19.)—There cannot be much doubt what this story meant. We are inclined to wish there was! Parables of this sort were not made in the happy days when Jesus sat by the sea of Gennesaret, or breathed the Beatitudes from the sunny slopes about Capernaum. Not till he had visited the large cities and seen the inhumanities of the rich could he thus paint their final lot. The parable is genuine, almost beyond question; for who of that time but Jesus could have produced so powerful an utterance? What a picture to give children the nightmare, and make the old folks' hair stand on end! This Lazarus has nothing to do with Lazarus of Bethany.

*24. THE UNJUST JUDGE (Luke XVIII: 1.)—What is the purpose of this parable according to the Evangelist's introduction? (1.) But what is it for which the woman petitions the unjust judge? (3.) And does he grant her request because it is reasonable, or because he is worried out with her entreaties? (5.) And what is it God will do if he is pressed in the same way? (7, 8.) Is this in the spirit of Matt. V: 44? We are not so much shocked that God's way should be illustrated by the way of an unjust judge, for the object is to heighten by contrast the certainty of the conclusion. If this hard magistrate will yield to entreaty, much more

will the good God. The points we do not like are: 1st, praying for vengeance at all; and, 2d, the notion that it is the part of men to influence the Divine Will by steady and persistent pressure.

25. **THE TWO SONS** (Matt. XXI: 28.)—A very simple and forcible illustration, which the smallest children can understand. That is a bad boy who says "I will not," when his father tells him to do anything. But is he any better who says "I will," and does not do it? And does not the other seem a pretty good fellow in comparison, if, after saucily refusing, he re-considers and does as he is bid? To whom did Jesus address this parable? How did it apply?

*26. **THE VINEYARD LET OUT TO HUSBANDMEN** (Matt. XXI: 33.)—In what city did Jesus utter the parables of this and the following chapters? Mark the undertone of dissatisfaction with the manner in which he was received. The hostile attitude of the authorities was by this time apparent. They might seize him any day and put him to death. The conviction of Jesus that he was the Messiah deepened as opposition to him increased, and he now freely referred to himself as the Son of God. To rebuke his opponents he tells this striking story of the vineyard. Who are represented by the husbandmen? (33.) Who by the servants? (34.) Who is the son? (38.) Who are meant by "other husbandmen"? (41.) What is meant by the rejected stone? (42.) Mark the prophecy in verse 41, which, if made then, is surprising enough.

27. **THE MARRIAGE FESTIVAL** (Matt. XXII: 1.)—Here we have once more a parable of the kingdom, but how different from the ten before considered! Now the many turn away from the teacher, and he has, therefore, much to say of those who will not come into his kingdom. What excuses do the various people invited to the feast give for not accepting? What course does the king finally take to get a company together? Where does he pick them up? (10.) What does this indicate as to the class of people who became disciples? After the company is assembled, what discovery is made? (11.) The expulsion of this person shows that freedom of admission into the church does not do away with the need of some spiritual fitness for membership.

28. **THE WISE AND THE FOOLISH MAIDENS** (Matt. XXV: 1.)—Here again it is a wedding, and instead of a proper garment, it is oil for their lamps that some are lacking. Weddings took place in the middle of the night, and lamps or torches were carried in the procession. (See Livermore's Commentary for fine illustrations of the same thing in Armenian and Hindoo weddings at the present day). The point enforced is the need of preparation for the kingdom or the church.

*29. THE TALENTS (Matt. XXV: 14.)—The word *talent* here means strictly a sum of money, and must not be confused with any other sense. Its value may have been about \$1,500—a round sum. The amount is immaterial, and the real intent of the parable will be much better obtained by reading for “talent,” whenever it occurs, “one thousand dollars.” Try it, and avoid a confused and misleading conception. The money loaned represents not brains so much as duties and opportunities. Show how opportunities of usefulness are taken from him who does not improve them, and given to the one who does. A profound and instructive parable.

30. THE SHEEP AND THE GOATS (Matt. XXV: 32, 33.)—This is hardly more than a simile, for directly the figure is dropped, and the prophecy of the judgment goes on. As his own end drew near, casting its shadow before, Jesus spoke more of the future lot of the good and the bad. These last parables leave us in little doubt what his idea of that future was. But do we find that the “blessed of my Father” are those only who have “believed in me”? or are they, as in the sermon on the Mount, the meek, the merciful, the pure in heart, those who have done the will of the Father in heaven?

LESSON XIII.

FORESEEING THE END.

(Read "Bible for Learners," Vol. III., Chap. XXVI.)

I. DANGERS THICKEN.

Before Jesus made the last journey to Jerusalem he had reason to apprehend the fate that awaited him. His enemies there had reached out to destroy him even in Galilee, and they would hardly miss their opportunity when they should have him among them. They had done their will with John, and John had said much less than he to excite their enmity. Why, then, did Jesus go to Jerusalem at all? Why did he not rather keep as far as he could from that city? If we have got inside the gospel story, we have learned that his whole scheme of reforming the religion of his people depended on his going to the front. He had published his doctrines, and they were now in question. Whether the Jewish nation would receive them waited on the verdict of Jerusalem. His duty to his people would not be done till he had made this final effort to win them to his cause. Not to face the dangers before him would have been to give up all for which he had devoted his life.

II. FOREBODINGS.

The prospect was not bright, and Jesus had a severe task in bringing his own apprehensions home to the minds of the disciples. They had just come to think that he was the Messiah, and could the Messiah be killed? It took many a long talk to make this understood. (Matt. XVI: 21.) What did Peter say when Jesus told them what he feared would happen? (Matt. XVI: 22.) This sounded to Jesus like a temptation to avoid the danger. What impetuous reply did he make? After this the disciples did not dare to interfere with his purposes.

*III. THE PREDICTION.

Did he clearly foresee what would take place? The record reads so (Matt. XVII: 22, 23; XXVI: 12, 18, 21), but the record was written after the event. The most we can say is, he foresaw that the chances were against him. Nobody could tell precisely what would happen. The dis-

ciples were over-sanguine. They thought he was going up to Jerusalem to be recognized as the Messiah, and to usher in the long-talked-of kingdom. Very likely, to offset their excess of hope, he was constrained to speak more gloomily than he felt. He may have sometime said that his enemies would put him to death. When that actually took place such words would be remembered, and other words in which he expressed some faint hope of a different result would be forgotten.

IV. NOT IN DESPAIR.

All the while, it is to be remarked, Jesus goes straightforward and wavers not at all about the coming of the kingdom. (Matt. XVI: 28: XX: 17-29.) The glad day may be deferred, but it will come. He was steadily drifting to the conclusion that his death would give an impetus to his teachings such as could not otherwise be given. Socrates had faced his executioners under a similar impression. May not Jesus have heard of that cup of hemlock from the Greeks in Galilee? If, in dying, he could serve the gospel for which he lived, his enemies might do their worst. They could not put him down by killing him. In a few days he would rise again. That is to say, the movement into which he had put his life would spring up from his grave and fulfill all his hope. This the disciples did not much understand. People have not well understood it since. They have thought he spoke of a bodily resurrection from the grave after three days. He was speaking of a far greater thing.

V. ONWARD.

He went forward then with this hope. If Jerusalem welcomed him as the leader of the new age, it was well. If not, it was also well. Jerusalem would suffer, but the kingdom would come. (Matt. XXIII: 37, 38: XXIV: 29-32) Truth crushed to earth will rise again. The enormous injustice of putting an innocent man to death will startle the world when it comes again to its senses, and all eyes will be turned upon him. The decree of his condemnation will be the call summoning the millions to hear his word. Very likely he may have thought that he would personally return to earth to have part in this triumph (Matt. XVI: 27, 28; XXIV: 30), but of this we cannot be sure. In matters they so little understood the disciples were poor reporters. He had his delusions, and this may have been one of them. It matters little. In the main thing his foresight has been justified.

LESSON XIV.

ARREST AND TRIAL.

I. DESERTION OF FRIENDS.

Many who had been interested in Jesus turned from him as his prospects darkened. The kingdom he preached seemed to them doomed to as complete a failure as the schemes of political independence that went before. Disappointment began to come over the disciples themselves, and as Jesus more and more clearly declared his fate, their expectations vanished. One of them thought Jesus had deceived them, holding out promises of great things, which led only to the dungeon or the cross. He grew noticeably cold, and Jesus had reason to suspect him of treachery. (Matt. XXVI: 20-26.)

II. A TRAITOR.

Who was Judas? With whom did he confer to bring about the arrest of Jesus? (Matt. XXVI: 14.) It was no difficult thing to seize the teacher, and they did not need the help of Judas; but their time had come, they thought, now that one of his intimate companions had turned against him. They gave him money, we are told—less than \$20. Do you think he did it for that? Is it not more likely that he did it out of resentment, thinking that Jesus, with the illusion of a kingdom in which the twelve apostles were to sit upon twelve thrones (Matt. XIX: 28), had brought them to straits in which their very lives were in danger?

III. THE ARREST.

Where was Jesus when the officers and the rabble came for him? (Matt. XXVI: 36.) How was he engaged? Was it night or day? Who piloted them into this place? Was it because of the darkness that they needed to have Jesus pointed out? How was he pointed out? Was any resistance offered (51)? This was the last show of nerve the disciples made. What odd comment is made in Luke concerning this ear? We read in Matthew: "Then all the disciples left him and fled."

*IV. REPORT OF THE TRIAL.

If they all fled we have no good means of knowing what went on afterward. The writer of the fourth gospel sees this difficulty, and would have us think that John stood by and went into the palace of the high priest and heard the trial. There is no evidence of this. Peter followed

in the crowd, and stayed outside in the court, where, from those passing out, he heard something of the proceedings. The gospels give varying accounts, as we should expect where all is hearsay. Beyond these we have only the known methods of Jewish courts to guide us.

V. THE CHARGES.

What were the accusations made against the prisoner? (Matt. XXVI: 61-66.) These seem very feeble charges on which to try a man for his life. But the Jewish church, like the Roman Catholic afterward, wanted nothing of free speech. Free-thinking and free-speaking have always been capital offences in ecclesiastical courts, and these were the real accusations against Jesus. In these courts, too, the prisoner is as good as condemned beforehand. Jesus saw this and made no defense. Two witnesses testified to something disrespectful he had said about the temple, and the high priest tried to get him to answer the charge, hoping to convict him out of his own mouth. What result? Why would he not speak? Finally the court asked him, in all solemnity, whether he was the Christ. Why did he answer this question? What was the answer? Hearing this claim, what did the high priest do?

VI. BEFORE PILATE.

The Sanhedrim, or Jewish court, had found him worthy of death: but the approval of the Roman governor was needed before the penalty could be inflicted. So his accusers took him before Pilate. Did they repeat the same charges there? The Roman would think such matters too trivial to be noticed. To get his assent to their verdict Jesus must be made out a rebel. So they said, "Here is the man who declares against Cæsar, calling himself 'King of the Jews.'" Jesus had never taken any such title; had always opposed any such movement. The gospels must be in error in saying that he admitted the charge when questioned by Pilate. Such an admission would not have been truthful. If he had made it, Pilate, as the representative of Cæsar, would instantly have turned against him. What did Pilate desire to do with him? By what device did he hope to bring it about? (Matt. XXVII: 17.) This proposal was made to the multitude, and the multitude now had a chance to save the hero they had once idolized. But the priests had seen them since, and the fickle populace shouted anything but Hosanna now. Through want of tact Pilate got into a position where he could not do as he would, and became at last the instrument of a prosecution for which he had no respect. What was the final sentence?

LESSON XV.

THE CRUCIFIXION.

(Read Bible for Learners, Vol. III, Chap. XXXVII.)

I. THE OCCASION.

It was the time of the great feast, when Jerusalem was full of people. The Roman governors made these gatherings the occasion for the exercise of their power to overawe the multitude, releasing some prisoner to please the people, and putting others to death in horrible fashion. It was expected that some would be crucified at this time, as usual. Who suggested that Jesus be one of the number? (Mark XV: 13.)

II. THE CROSS.

Death by crucifixion did not belong to the Jewish code. It was introduced by the Romans, who were masters of the world in cruelty. Now a-days if man or beast is to be killed we insist upon it that it shall be done quickly and with no unnecessary pain. But crucifixion was devised expressly to induce a lingering death with constantly increasing anguish. A strong man might be a whole day, or even two or three days, dying upon the cross. The barbarous details of execution by this means may be imagined, but are too horrid for description.

III. TO GOLGOTHA.

At what time of day was Jesus taken before Pilate? (Mark XV: 1.) The proceedings there did not last more than an hour or two. The governor showed a disposition to save the prisoner, but did not care enough about it to insist on releasing him. Jesus was handed over to the ruthless soldiery, who, regarding him as a base culprit, treated him with shameful indignities. (Mark XV: 16-21.) While it was yet early in the day they were on their way with him to the place of execution, as it was not the custom to delay in these matters. It was a spot just outside the walls, a little knoll where crowds could gather round, for the Romans wanted everybody to see their cruelty. There an upright post was set in the ground for each of the victims. The horizontal beam which completed the cross, each was compelled to carry. Jesus had already suffered so

much and been so rudely handled that his strength gave way, and he sank down under the weight of this piece of timber and another man was pressed in to carry it. Who was this? What other persons were executed at the same time with Jesus?

IV. THE INSCRIPTION.

In this ghastly scene Jesus was the central figure. The other sufferers were only incidental. Over his cross a board was set on which there was an inscription. How did it read? In what languages was it written? This was done quite as much in derision of Jews in general as of Jesus. But it indicates the accusation on which his death was demanded before Pilate. He was a fomenter of sedition, one likely to lead an army to overthrow the Roman dominion! Nothing could be more absurd, and in this way Pilate had his little revenge on the people for forcing him to consent to an injustice. The fourth gospel has it that the chief priests objected to this form of inscription. (John XIX: 21.) How would they have had it read? But he wanted to humiliate them, and so he had it: *This is Jesus, the king of the Jews.*

V. THE WITNESSES.

The executioners were the Roman soldiers, but an infuriated Jewish mob was there, led by the priests and Pharisees who had brought about this dreadful thing. Were any of the twelve disciples on the ground? What friends of Jesus were standing in the distance, full of tender sympathy but powerless to help? (Mark XV: 40 41.) What a sad time was this for them, and for all that loved the Master! They could only be glad for one thing, that life did not hold out, as in the case of some victims of the cross, through days and nights of agony. Jesus was of delicate constitution, and was well-nigh overcome by what he passed through before he reached Golgotha. In a few hours all was over.

VI. ENLARGEMENTS OF THE RECORD.

Here, as elsewhere, a wise discrimination must be exercised in reading the record. Most of what Jesus is said to have spoken from the cross is of doubtful authenticity;—first, because no friend of his was there to report his words, and, secondly, because some of the sayings are not such as he would be likely to utter. What are the sayings attributed to these last hours? What strange phenomena are said to have occurred? (Matt. XXVII: 45, 51 53.) Do you suppose these things really happened? or were they reported by those who believed something of the kind ought to have taken place, and so came to think they had taken place?

LESSON XVI.

THE AFTER-VISIONS.

(Read Bible for Learners, Vol. III, Book II, Chap. I.)

I. DISMAY OF THE DISCIPLES.

The enemies of Jesus had done their utmost. The overthrow of his cause seemed to be complete. He was killed and his followers were hiding in terror, or fugitives from Jerusalem. How wofully were they disappointed at the result! A few terrible days had dashed all their hopes of the kingdom. They fled, we may presume, to Galilee, to their old haunts, away from the bloody-handed persecutors.

II. FAITH REVIVES.

Not till they reached their homes were they themselves again. Then as they recalled the Master and his words; his unwavering faith in the kingdom, his fearlessness of death; when they remembered what he had said in the darkest moments of a final and glorious triumph, it began to seem to them that he could not be dead, that he must come back to them. The scenes amidst which they had dwelt together with him deepened this impression, and it took stronger and stronger hold upon them. In a little while it began to be reported in the circle of the faithful that Jesus had actually been seen. It needed but this to confirm a general expectation, and soon others saw him. From these experiences of the disciples in Galilee arose the stories of the re-appearance which are found in the gospels, the scene of which was naturally transferred to Jerusalem and vicinity. The statement was stoutly made by those who had seen the vision that Jesus had indeed risen; at the same time they were in doubt and knew not what to think. (Luke XXIV : 37-41.) And not all who heard the story believed it. (Mark XVI : 13.)

III. THE VISION ON THE ROAD TO EMMAUS.

(Luke XXIV : 13-36.) Relate this beautiful story, so full of the reverence and love of the disciples for their Master. Do we know who the "two" were who had this vision? Do we know of any such place as

Emmaus near Jerusalem? It looks as though the original scene of this incident was in Galilee, especially as there is a place of this name on the Sea of Gennesaret.

* IV. LEGEND OF APPEARANCES AT THE TOMB.

Accounts naturally grew up of strange appearances at the tomb of Jesus. (Matt. XXVIII: 1-11.) Who are said to have visited the sepulchre early Monday morning? According to Matthew the visit was one of sorrow only; Mark (XVI: 1,) and Luke (XXIV: 1,) indicate that they came to embalm the body. Observe the striking disagreements in the three accounts. How many angels appeared according to the first gospel? How many according to the others? The appearance of angels on the scene is one of the sure signs that the story is unreal.

* V. OTHER REPORTED APPEARANCES OF JESUS.

After these stories became current others were added, such as Matt. XXVIII: 16 ff; Mark XVI: 14 ff; Luke XXIV: 36 ff. The character of a vision induced by excitement and expectancy is mostly wanting in these, and they seem rather to have been told for the purpose of establishing certain doctrines,—the doctrine of the resurrection, of the super-human nature of Christ, of the necessity of belief and of baptism. Their bearing upon these questions should be carefully noted.

* VI. PAUL'S VISION.

Saint Paul is the only person from whom we have the direct statement that he had seen the risen Christ. (I. Cor. XV: 8.) He seems to refer to the sight as a vision, and classes with it all the previous appearances as of the same character. The difference between *actual* sight and *seeming* sight was not then so clearly defined as now, and the vision was apt to be adduced in evidence where it would not now be admissible. Would the statement of five hundred or of five thousand people that they had seen Mr. Emerson within the last six months be any indication that Mr. Emerson's body had left his tomb in Concord?

VII. THE REAL RESURRECTION.

No doubt Jesus saw in his own death the course of triumph for his cause. He would be smitten down, but shortly he would rise again. The kingdom of heaven which he preached would not be overthrown, but securely established by his martyrdom. His name and his word, dragged in the dust of Jerusalem, trodden upon and befouled, would be raised up and hallowed in another generation. The children of those who

clamored for his blood would one day call him blessed. In this way Jesus is arisen indeed. Who of all the sons of men has been exalted so high! But it was not personal exaltation that he desired so much as the triumph of his kingdom. He was willing to go down even to oblivion if need be, that the kingdom of God and his righteousness might be established. And it was from the very cross and tomb of Christ that Christianity went forth to be a world-religion. Scribes and Pharisees thought they had killed the cause with the Leader; but the Leader lived on in his followers, and the cause sprang almost at once into commanding influence. The spirit of Jesus has never left the world. No other soul has so repeated itself through the ages,—none is so living and potent to-day.

LESSON XVII.

THE JESUS OF MATTHEW AND THE JESUS OF JOHN.

We have traced, as best we could, the actual career of Jesus. We have seen his growth from babyhood to manhood, and marked some of the mental changes through which he passed from his first apprehension that he was called to preach on to the final catastrophe. But Jesus has undergone more changes since his death, a thousand times, than before, and to the study of these changes you will have occasion to give much thought. I shall now but briefly indicate a few of them,—in this lesson those that took place while the New Testament was being written.

I. JESUS IN THE OLDEST GOSPELS.

If we had a record of the life of Jesus written on the spot by a competent person, we might expect it to give us an idea of him as he really was. Have we any such record? How long was it after the crucifixion before the first written gospel, as we have it, came into existence? We cannot say exactly, but it may have been sixty or eighty years. In the last lesson we saw how the disciples' idea of Jesus began to change as soon as his death had taken place. This change of opinion went on through these sixty or eighty years, a more and more exalted notion of the man being formed, so that when the first three gospels came to take their final form, nobody thought of Jesus as he really was. All who had ever seen him were dead or in their second childhood. All the while there was a tendency to add some extravagance to the stories concerning him. The resurrection, which was first a rumor, grew into a detailed account, to which was added a visible ascent to heaven on the clouds. Stories of miracle and of angels were multiplied, giving the result we see in these gospels.

II. STILL A MAN.

And yet in these gospels he is only a man—a prophet, a mighty hero, with wonderful powers, but yet a man. Read them over and see for yourselves that this is so. He is first a little baby, and grows to manhood. He has human weaknesses, human limitations. When there is nothing to eat he gets hungry, just like any one else. (Matt. IV: 2;

XXI: 18; Mark XI: 12.) There are some things he does not know (Matt. XXIV: 36; Mark XIII: 32); some things he cannot do. He struggles with poverty and misfortune and disappointment in unmistakably human fashion. Much as the writers wish to exalt him, it does not occur to them to claim that he is more than a supremely gifted man.

III. RESULTS OF ANOTHER LAPSE OF TIME.

Suppose another sixty or eighty years to roll by, the same process of exaltation going on. By that time these gospels would not convey the prevailing idea of Jesus, and need would be felt for another gospel which should lift him far higher and more apart from other men. Suppose an able Christian writer, deeply sensible of this need, undertaking to produce such a gospel, suppose the book to be written, and you have John's gospel. What a change from Matthew!

IV. THE JESUS OF JOHN.

On our theory, none of the gospel writers was an apostle. The last of the twelve had been dead probably seventy years when this gospel appeared. Turn to it and compare the first chapter with the first of Matthew. No baby crying in a manger here—that were too insignificant a form for the Messiah to take. How does he first appear? (John I: 29.) He might have dropped down from heaven for aught we can gather from John. Indeed, this seems to be what he would have us think. (John III: 13, 31; VI: 33, 38, 41, 51, 58.) This Jesus, who was not born like other folks, and who did not grow up, is just as wise at first as ever afterward. (John III: 24, 25. Compare Luke II: 52), and everybody that sees him instantly recognizes him as the Son of God. (John I: 31, 36, 41, 49.) He starts out with no simplicity at all, but as a profound mystic. (John III. Compare Matt. V.) He begins at once to talk mysteriously of a resurrection. (John II: 19, 22.) There is very little left here of the Jesus of Matthew. On through the whole book we have altogether another person in respect of rank and assumed dignity. He does not chat with the disciples, but makes long and stately speeches. Very beautiful speeches they are, many of them, and such as a mighty superhuman being might well have made; what I point out is that the object of the writer unmistakably is to convey the impression of such a being. But still he is not the Supreme God. What is he? The notion seems to be of a person midway between God and man, more than angel, who might indirectly be called God (John I: 1, 14; V: 18; X: 30), and yet ordinarily to be reckoned a man. The theological thread is beginning to weave itself into inextricable confusion.

LESSON XVIII.

THE JESUS OF POST-BIBLICAL TIME.

The smallest child that has followed the course of these lessons has seen that the idea of Jesus presented in them is very different from the view commonly held. It remains for us now to complete our survey by a glance at the processes by which the current view was reached.

I. FURTHER EXALTATION.

We have seen how the tendency in the early church to higher and higher conceptions of the nature of Jesus required before the end of the second century the writing of another gospel, in which he should appear as at any rate a superhuman being. The production of this gospel had the effect greatly to accelerate this tendency, and in fifty years more the leaders of the church very commonly called him a God. Christianity was then being preached among polytheists, and the idea of more gods than one gave no offence. It was rather a recommendation. The idea also of a man becoming God was familiar to these people. They had from their cradles been worshipping such gods. Justin Martyr, speaking to these people, said: "When we say that Jesus Christ, our teacher, was the Word, the first-born of God, * * we affirm nothing different from what is said by you of the sons of Jove, and nothing new. You know how many sons your esteemed writers attribute to him. There is Mercury (called by you) the Word, the teacher of all, Æsculapius," etc. Justin compares Jesus, the Son of God, to Mercury, the son of Jove. He explicitly says that Jesus and his Father are two distinct persons (which, by the way, seems quite reasonable.) Tatian, Theophilus, Athenagoras, Irenæus, Tertullian, all held to one Supreme God, and regarded Jesus in some sense a subordinate God, though with a growing tendency to advance him to the very highest rank. Clement, early in the third century, says, speaking of the most excellent things in earth and in heaven: "But the most perfect and most holy, and most commanding and most regal (a wordy saint was Clement), and by far the most beneficent nature, is that of the Son, *which is next to the only omnipotent Father.*"

The doctrine of the equality of the Son with the Father could not long be delayed after this. The Trinity was not yet, but the egg was laid, and the chicken was in process of incubation. Still, somewhat later, Origen could say, summing up his doctrine of holy things: "Greater is the power of the Father than that of the Son and the Holy Spirit and greater that of the Son than that of the Holy Spirit and again the power of the Holy Spirit surpasses that of other holy things."

II. THE NICENE CREED.

In another century these doctrines of the Fathers making Jesus *next to* the Supreme Being had become heretical. So speedily went on the process of exaltation. There were two parties in the church, a declining party holding still that Jesus was a created being, more than man, more than any other creature, but still created, having a beginning: and a rising party, holding the new doctrine of the Trinity. A great Council was called by the Emperor Constantine to settle the matter, and convened at Nice in the year 325. What can you find out about this Council? (See any Church History or Cyclopædia.) What doctrine concerning Jesus was promulgated? Who was the leader of the opposition? What was done with him? Can you tell the story of his reinstatement through the influence of Constantia, the Emperor's sister? As between the two doctrines we should have very little to choose. Arius himself subscribed the Nicene Creed, with some "mental reservations," perhaps. For this creed see "Book of Common Prayer."

III. CONCLUSION.

Such in outline is the process of exaltation by which, in three hundred years from the crucifixion, Jesus came to be regarded as the Supreme God. The strange transformation becomes perfectly intelligible when we note the conditions then existing and the influences which prompted and hastened the development of such an idea. There are signs now that after fifteen triumphant centuries this idea has spent its force. There is a disposition to set aside this theological fiction and seek, even at this late day, for the real Jesus. It is said that when Saul was chosen to be the first king of Israel, and search was made for him in the camp, he was not to be found, for he had *hidden himself behind the stuff*. Behind what mountainous piles of stuff has Jesus been hidden from the time John contrived the magic screen of his gospel! We have tried to pierce this mountain heap and see the MAN; and have we not found that, as in the case of that first king of Israel,—“When he stood among the people he was higher than any of the people, from his shoulders upward”?—

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